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ABSTRACT

In the fall of 1974, Community Unit School District 300, Dundee, Illinois, adopted the quarter curriculum at three high schools in order to provide scheduling flexibility and curriculum improvement. Curriculum guides financed by the board of education were developed by those expected to teach the course. The process utilized in completely revising the curriculum is sequentially outlined in this report. (MLF)

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# THE QUARTER SYSTEM: A CASE STUDY IN PRACTICAL CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

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In the spring of 1972 Community Unit School District 300, Dundee, Illinois faced the realities of a traditionally scheduled program of studies, expanding enrollments, and limited facilities with a proposal to move to the quarter system.[1] The decision was made to move to the quarter system for these reasons.

1) it could be adapted to the year-round school if necessary;
2) it provided scheduling flexibility;
3) it could be applied to all levels (elementary, middle and high school) in the District if necessary, and
4) it was a feasible means for significantly improving the curriculum.

The District implemented the Quarter Curriculum at the high school level in the fall of 1974. The validity of items two and four above was established. The units offered increased from 117 to 198! The course offerings increased from 164 to 610. Table I reports these changes in detail.

More impressive than the numerical increase is the quality of the new courses offered under the Quarter Curriculum. Illustrative of these new courses are: "Understanding the Media," "Literature of Suspense," "Teen Age Romance," "Literature of War," "Why Man Laughs," "Anthropology," "Philosophy: The Ideas of Man," "Genetics," "Microbiology," "French for Tourists," "Landscaping and Turf Care," "Agri-business Management," and "Barber Shop Chorus."

## HOW WAS THIS ACCOMPLISHED?

Although a mathematical conversion from the semester to the quarter system would normally result in a fifty percent increase in course offerings and schedule options for students, more was desired and achieved. Through the leadership of the administration, with the support of the Board of Education, and through faculty participation, the conversion to the Quarter System became the vehicle to completely revise the curriculum. The process utilized is sequentially outlined below.

Step 1: The teachers were convened in workshops during 1972-73 under the leadership of department chairpersons and challenged to develop course titles that would reflect subject/student needs. No limits were established other than the imaginations of the faculty.

Step 2: The department chairpersons screened the proposed course titles in cooperation with the teachers of their units.

Step 3: The teachers were challenged in a January 1973 workshop to begin the development of actual course description.

Step 4: Advisory committees were formed to secure input from students and the community regarding the proposed conversion to the Quarter Curriculum. Simultaneously the community was informed of the proposed change and the consequences thereof.

[1] The high schools of the District with approximate enrollments: Crown High School (2000 students), Dundee High (1700 students) and Hampshire High (300 students).



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Step 5: The feasibility of the Quarter Curriculum as a means of extending the school year and improving the curriculum was studied by consultants from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale during 1973-74.

Step 6: The decision to convert to the Quarter System was approved by the Board of Education in March, 1973.

Step 7: In the spring of 1973, the Board approved $60,000 for summer curriculum writing projects to prepare for the Quarter Curriculum with the understanding that a similar amount would be available during the summer of 1974.

The process by which the funds allocated by the Board was, in our opinion, the key to the curriculum development process. (At this point it should be noted that the process was developed internally by the local school administrative staff.) It is judged to be as unique as it was effective by the writers!

The development process (Step 7 above) elaborated:

First, the Assistant Superintendent of Secondary Education through the Department Chairpersons, sought out faculty members interested in preparing curriculum guides for the new system. (The format of the Curriculum Guide, illustrated in Table II, was established by the district's curriculum council.)

Subsequently, the faculty met with their chairpersons to determine the priority of need for curriculum proposals (Curriculum Guides). Upon the establishment of course priority, the faculty member(s) completed the Curriculum Projects application form illustrated in Table III.

Next, the faculty member(s) initiating the course proposal met with the Assistant Superintendent of Secondary Education to discuss project needs, time requirements, and to negotiate the final contract price. If the proposals were approved (approximately 95% were), a contract was negotiated, in the form illustrated in Table IV. Although the contract price was based upon the number of hours estimated to be required to complete the Curriculum Guide, it should be noted that the amount paid was the original amount contracted for regardless of the time actually required. This policy was deemed to be important for budget purposes as well as efficiency enhancement. All participants were so informed.

At this point in time, typically during the summer, the teachers proceeded to develop their Curriculum Guides under the supervision of their Department Chairpersons.

Lastly, upon the satisfactory completion of the Guide, as approved by the Chairperson, a pay order was initiated and the teacher(s) paid for his/her work. Subsequently the Curriculum Guides were printed in loose leaf form with spiral bindings. Thus, the curriculum is truly a mimeographed curriculum prepared in a form that accommodates continuous revision and updating. Certainly the financial support by the Board will insure the continuous evaluation/revision of the curriculum by those who deliver it, i.e., the teachers.

## IN RETROSPECT

To date (1974) some 378 Curriculum Guides have been developed and an additional 228 are in process. Costs range from $90 to $360 per Guide. Additionally, these Guides were developed by those who expected to teach the courses. Faculty involvement was widespread as evidenced by the 182 teachers, or approximately 60 percent of the senior high school staff having participated in the process to date. It is our opinion that this model for curriculum development is systematic, functional, and economically

efficient. It has done the job as evidenced by some 3865 students presently enrolled for 1974-75 in some 436 individual courses in the three high schools of this district. The students are as excited as their teachers with the new curriculum.

Even more significant was the demonstrated wisdom of the leadership of the Dundee district to effectively utilize the conversion to the Quarter Curriculum as a vehicle to expand the curriculum by 446 course offerings and approximately 81 units of instruction while simultaneously preparing for the conversion to the extended school year should conditions so necessitate. (The subsequent approval of a 16.9 million dollar bond issue in 1974 has since delayed the necessity to extend the school year.)

In retrospect, it is our judgment that the Quarter Curriculum offers more for less than any wide scale curriculum involvement to emerge in recent years. More for less was achieved in terms of a significantly changed and broadened program of studies designed to be relevant to student needs/interests while minimizing the anxieties commonly associated with major curriculum revision. The relevance was assured by the implementation of the college type registration procedures wherein students were permitted to select both courses and teachers. Oh yes, there were the pains associated with the project in the form of increased scheduling problems due to expanded choices and non-computer scheduling. However, these too, were minimal when contrasted with the problems encountered by those converting to a modular schedule. And if this weren't achievement enough, the percent of students in attendance during the first two months of the Quarter Curriculum has increased from 93.95 to 95.28 percent at the high school level.

Admittedly it is somewhat premature to render a summative type evaluation of the Quarter Curriculum: however, a large majority of teachers, administrators, students, and patrons are both excited and pleased in Community Unit School District 300.

TABLE I: HIGH SCHOOL CURRICULAR OFFERINGS BEFORE AND AFTER THE QUARTER CURRICULUM

| Subject Areas | 1972-73 (Before | | 1974-75 (After) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No. Courses | No. Units | No. Courses | No. Units |
| Agriculture | 7 | 4.0 | 22 | 8.14 |
| Art | 5 | 2.25 | 31 | 10.13 |
| Business Education | 18 | 12.25 | 49 | 15.4 |
| Cooperative Programs | 5 | 10.00 | 33 | 24.67 |
| English | 24 | 14.00 | 62 | 20.67 |
| Foreign Language | 18 | 16.5 | 64 | 21.34 |
| Home Economics | 13 | 7.25 | 33 | 10.4 |
| Industrial Oriented | 19 | 17.0 | 46 | 21.07 |
| Mathematics | 18 | 13.5 | 47 | 15.67 |
| Music | 9 | 2.4 | 46 | 8.73 |
| Physical Education | 8 | 2.0 | 80 | 10.13 |
| Driver Education | 1 | .12 | 4 | 0.73 |
| Science | 7 | 7.0 | 47 | 15.4 |
| Social Studies | 12 | 9.0 | 46 | 15.3 |
| | 164 | 117.27 | 610 | 197.78 |

TABLE II: CURRICULUM GUIDE FORMAT ILLUSTRATED

Title: (Literature of the Old American West)
Grade: (II)
Quarters: (1)
Periods per week: (5)
Credit: (5 quarter hours)
Prerequisite: (Career Communication 100)
Description: (This course is a realistic and exciting view of the settlement of the Old West. Short stories, novels and poems are included.)

Purpose: (American Literature of the Old West is designed for the career oriented student -- the themes (of the course) are:)

| General Objectives | Specific Objectives | Activities and Assignments |
|---|---|---|

Instructional Activities: (Including study questions and tests)
Required Textbooks
Supplementary Reading Lists

TABLE III: APPLICATION FOR CURRICULUM PROJECT

CURRICULUM PROJECTS
1974-75

Office Use Only:
Project # _____
Account # _____

Department: _____
Supervisor: _____
Date: _____
Project Title _____
Location of project and schedule: _____

Scope of project: _____

Minimum Outcome: _____

Course(s) # _____

Participants:

| a | Name | School | Hours | Pay |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| | | | TOTAL | |

Approved: _____ _____
Department Head Date

_____ _____
Assistant Superintendent Date

TABLE IV: CONTRACT FOR CURRICULUM PROJECT

1974-75

TO:

RE: Curriculum Project

Project # _____

You are hereby notified that the curriculum project of your department that includes your participation has been approved. A number has been assigned and appears above.

Your participation in the project is approved for _____ hours at $6.00 per hour. Participants of the project will not be paid until the minimum outcomes as outlined in the project proposal are completed and approved.

All project work will be done in the designated location in the proposal. Any adjustments to the project will be approved only by the Department Head and Assistant Superintendent.

CONTRACT TOTAL $ _____

Kenneth E. Neubert
Superintendent

Donald H. Rich
Assistant Superintendent

I accept the above conditions as a basis for curriculum project employment.

_____
Signature

KEN/DHR/lr